2: Stefansson--121 (1908-12) 1914 Copper Eskimo
116, 301, 778

"Bone buttons, round or rectangular in outline, are worn by children bound on the forehead above and between the eyes, these are purely charms, we were told. Each child wears only one button. Almost any conceivable thing may be carried, usually in a bag, as a general charm by either men or women, usually, though, it is some rare thing, as something they have found in a deserted Indian camp, a part of some rare bird or animal, etc."

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF COPPER ESKIMO CLOTHING

291 296 Some of the disadvantages of Copper Eskimo clothing have been mentioned already. The caribou fur shed its hair with dampness, and the shoes and boots soled with the skin of the common seal quickly wore out on stony ground and required almost daily patching during the summer months. The swarming mosquitoes of midsummer frequently assailed the only half-covered knees and wrists; the high-waisted coat hardly checked the winter gales from chilling the stomach; and the rather scanty hood could not shield the forehead and cheeks from frostbite. Despite these defects the costume of the men was extraordinarily well adapted to the climatic conditions, and capable of very little improvement with the meagre resources at their command. It was both lighter and warmer than woollen clothing of proportionate bulk, and at the same time much healthier, because it allowed the air to circulate freely under the trousers and coat. The four-layered footgear was eminently practical, being much easier to dry over a blubber-burning lamp than the thick-furred two-layered footgear, fitting tightly around the legs of long breeches, which has long been fashionable among the Eskimo of the Mackenzie River delta and northern Alaska. The women's costume, however, was much less satisfactory. The wide shoulders and enormous hood were wholly unnecessary, and the latter both heavy and cumbersome. Worse still were the ridiculous stockings, which hardly protected the legs even in mild weather, and in blizzards frequently filled with snow. More than one woman had lost her toes by wearing them, and many had incurred severe frostbites.

296 The Copper Eskimo took great care of their clothing, as was only natural, seeing that skins were never too plentiful and the labour of dressing them, cutting them out, and sewing them together was considerable. The first thought of every native on entering a snow-hut was to beat the loose snow from his clothing with the stick that each household provided for that purpose. Spare clothes were packed away in large seal- or caribou-hide bags, which were stored in winter either in a cavity under the sleeping platform or on the roof of the snow-hut beyond reach of the dogs; in summer they were deposited on high caches under other possessions, or buried beneath mounds of stones. Strips of white fur from the belly of the caribou received special attention on account of their value for insertions, and the women carefully cleansed them of all dirt and blood-stains with soft snow. 294 281

ADORNMENT

301 237 *Ornaments and Charms Attached to Clothing.* Men's coats often trailed on the back white lemming skins, arranged with the usual regard for symmetry. There were generally three skins, one attached to the back of each shoulder and the third spaced half-way between them at a somewhat lower level (*See* Figure 36); rarely there were five, arranged in the same fashion, but, of course, closer together, and forming a slightly curved line parallel with the lines at the neck and waist. A native who owned only one lemming skin generally sewed it midway between the shoulders, but at times suspended it from a button in the small of the back. This button, made of bone, musk-ox horn, or, rarely, the boiled albumen of a bird's egg (Figure 37), appeared quite frequently on the everyday outer coat, and was an integral part of the heavy winter coat used in sealing, where it served to attach both the hunter's foot-pad of polar bear or caribou fur and the bone pins with which he closed the wounds in his seals. Men seldom affected other ornaments, but one Prince Albert Sound Eskimo wore a bandolier of musk-ox fur, and another a bandolier of polar-bear claws suspended from a strap of caribou hide (Figure 38).

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Figure 36. Lemming-skin pendants on the back of man's coat. IV.D.867. Approx. 1/3.

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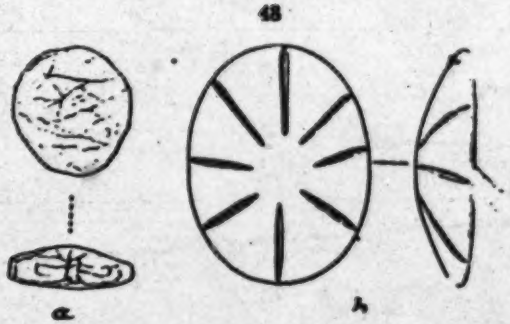

Figure 27. Buttons for the backs of men's coats; a: of boiled albumen, IV.D.818, 1/1; b: of bone, IV.D.1036, 2/1.

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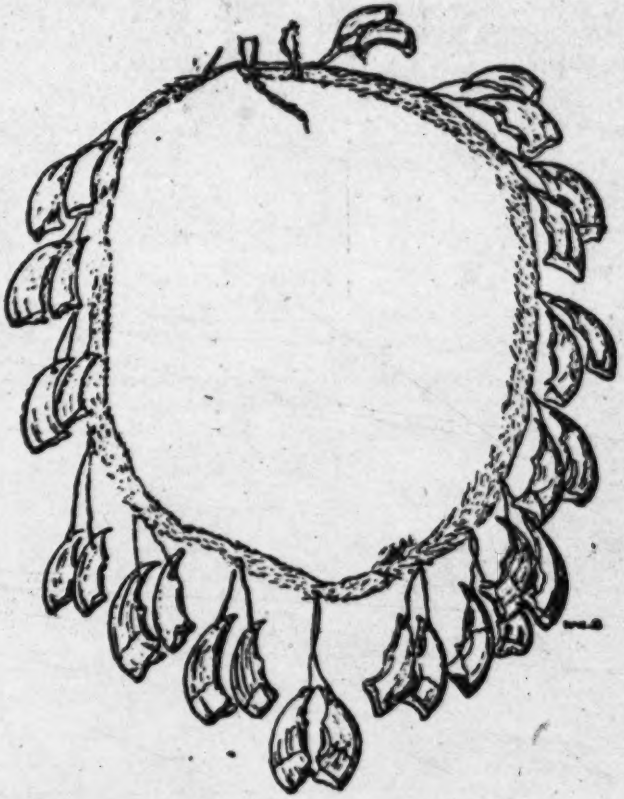

Figure 28. Caribou-fur bandolier with claw pendants. IV.D.82. 1/2.

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Women occasionally strung a row of small bones (Figure 39) or of caribou incisor teeth across the fronts of their coats, but other appendages to their clothing were not so much ornaments as charms. Every mother who carried a baby sewed to her coat some object that she conceived would make the child a skilful hunter or an efficient housewife when it grew up; and she transferred it to the child's clothing as soon as it was old enough to run about. The commonest of these charms were small bones or pieces of fur from a caribou or seal that had been killed by a near relative, e.g., an uncle or a grandfather. Thus, the combination coat and trousers of one little boy carried a string of caribou fur on the chest and another on the back of the left shoulder. Another child wore on his belt a strip of fur from the forehead of a caribou; to the coat-shoulder of a third were sewn three or four feathers from the tail of a redpoll; and a fourth dangled a tern's bill from his back.

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Figure 39. Chain of fox bones from the front of woman's coat. IV.D.371. 1/2.

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The bone (rarely wood) belt toggle might perhaps be regarded as an ornament, because though generally invisible, it was often decorated with incised lines (Figure 40). A very small toggle on one child's belt (Figure 41) was perforated from side to side, and so closely resembled the toggles attached to needle-cases that it may have been diverted from its original purpose.

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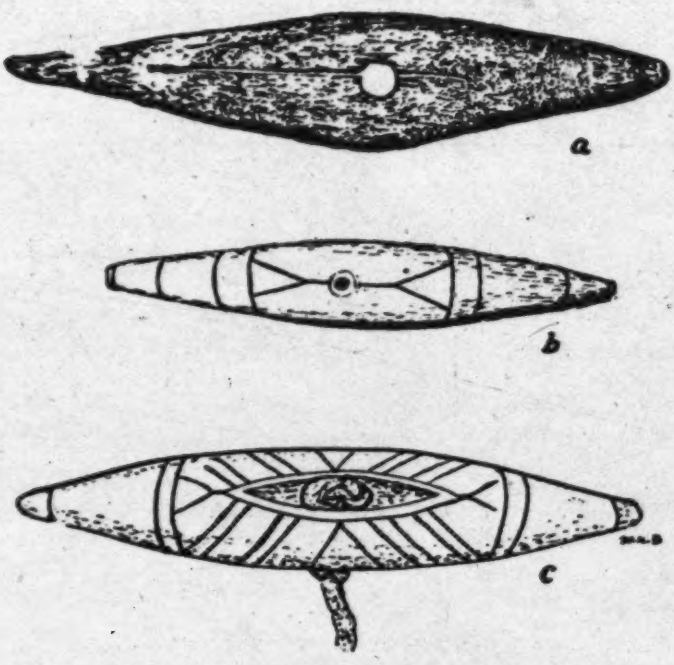

Figure 40. Women's belt toggles. IV.D.1372, 844. 1/1.

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For a time I fancied that belt toggles could be distinguished from the toggles used for hauling seals (Figure 150) by the direction of the line-hole, but my collection of both kinds showed that any such distinction was illusory; in both, the hole was drilled indifferently from top to bottom or from side to side. It is probable, indeed, that many a toggle that served for hauling seals during the winter months became a belt toggle when the sealing season ended. At all events, I know of no criterion for separating the two except that if a toggle is of wood, or if its hole is of very small diameter, it probably terminated a belt strap and was not used for sealing.

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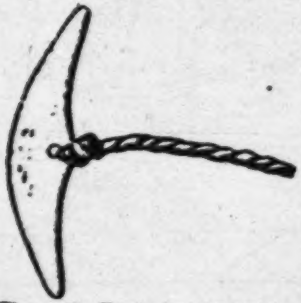

Figure 41. Toggle from child's belt. IV.D.212. 1/1.

Combs and Snow Goggles. Though not strictly ornaments, these may conveniently find a place under that heading. Combs were not very highly regarded by the Copper Eskimo. Many women employed their fingers instead, and those who did possess combs used them only rarely. All that I saw were made of bone, and seldom exceeded 4 inches in length.

223 They skinned birds in exactly the same way as small animals, except that
237 they tore the skin of a small bird down the legs without cutting it, and, when
825 drawing the skin over the head, held the feet in the teeth instead of tying them
136 to a tent-pole or other convenient object. Loon skins made excellent whisks for beating off the mosquitoes. The bill of the largest species of loon, *Gavia stellata*, was frequently sewn to the top of the dancing cap; and the feet skins [301] of swans, geese, and ducks converted into tinder bags. Every household had its [415] stock of ptarmigan skins for use as dusters, and to wipe the hands and face after [515] eating or handling blubber; one skin served the whole family and all its visitors until every feather was worn out. The Eskimo used other bird skins for the [262] same purpose, especially sea-gull skins, the oily feathers being naturally more [294] suitable for towels than ptarmigan feathers. The skins of fish were usually eaten. The Copper Eskimo, unlike others of their race, never made any real clothing from fish or bird skins, although sometimes they stuffed a few feathers or the skin of a loon inside their sealskin shoes.

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
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Ikpuck and Icehouse.

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